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ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 212111Z DEC 06  
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1886  
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6412  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0108  
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 3736  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7610  
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 4858  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2108  
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0202  
RUEHHE/AMEMBASSY HELSINKI 0083  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 2182  
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON 0089  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0104  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 3239  
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 1995  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4304  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 0111  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 0452  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0109  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 4745  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0279  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 9332  
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM 0156  
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE 0735  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0268  
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 0840  
RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO 0939  
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 2113  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 003457

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STATE FOR WHA/AND  
TREASURY FOR SGOOCH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/21/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BL](#)  
SUBJECT: MAS SEEKS TO UNDERMINE COCHABAMBA OPPOSITION

REF: LA PAZ 3354

Classified By: Ecopol Counselor Andrew Erickson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

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Summary  
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[¶](#)1. (C) On December 14, Prefect Manfred Reyes Villa led a march attended by over 50,000 people in favor of autonomy and a two-thirds vote on constitutional articles in the pivotal department of Cochabamba. In response to the march, the Regional Workers Federation (COD) held a protest on December 19, which erupted into violence after someone threw a tear gas grenade. The COD, joined by other social organizations, vowed on December 20 to pressure the prefect to resign. The COD's planned pressure tactics against Reyes Villa seem to be a thinly-veiled MAS attempt to oust a formidable opposition leader in the "swing state" of Cochabamba. End summary.

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Counter-March Erupts into Violence  
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[¶](#)2. (C) On December 14, Prefect of Cochabamba Manfred Reyes Villa led a march in favor of national unity, regional

autonomy, and the argument that new constitutional articles should be approved by two-thirds of constituent assembly members. More than 50,000 people participated in the march. Reyes Villa proposed holding a referendum on autonomy within sixty days. In response to the march, the Regional Workers Federation (COD) held a protest against the two-thirds vote and autonomy on December 19. The protest became violent after a tear gas grenade exploded. Protesters blamed the police for the explosion, while the police chief blamed university students. Protesters responded to the tear gas by throwing sticks and stones at the police.

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MAS-Backed Social Groups Demand Prefect's Resignation  
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13. (C) The COD convened a meeting on December 20 attended by over forty social sector groups to discuss retaliatory measures against the prefect. Reyes Villa denied that he had authorized the use of tear gas against the protesters and said that the police had found dynamite in some protesters' backpacks. However, the COD vowed to pressure the prefect until he resigned, calling him a fascist oligarch. According to press reports, a Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) senator declared that MAS-affiliated sectors back the COD's decision.

Reyes Villa stated that he would not resign and that democracy would be respected. MAS support in Cochabamba is high; however, the province is divided. Reyes Villa, who was elected democratically in December 2005 under his own political party banner, also enjoys significant support -- 47 percent according to polls conducted in early December.

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Comment  
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14. (C) The COD's plan to force Prefect Manfred Reyes Villa from power seems to be a thinly-veiled MAS attempt to oust a formidable opposition leader in the pivotal department of Cochabamba. The threats against Reyes Villa are reminiscent of the actions taken against La Paz' opposition Prefect Jose Luis "Pepe Lucho" Paredes earlier this month (reftel). End comment.  
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